

depravity. However, there was considerable applause when the play ended; and Zola and Busnach received the congratulations of their friends in the manager's private room, where Madame Zola, suddenly turning towards her husband, scolded him. for having failed to order any supper to celebrate the happy event. "My dear," Zola answered, remembering, no doubt, the supper intended to celebrate the success of "Le Bouton de Rose," which had become a fiasco, "I'm superstitious, you know, and I'm convinced that if I had ordered, a supper the piece would have failed."¹

It was attacked by the critics on the morrow, some complaining that they had been imposed upon, that they had been led to expect a masterpiece of revolutionary audacity, and that only a repugnant play, base and crapulous in its fidelity to life, had been offered them. Others, of course, protested against the exhibition of the harlot on the stage; and to them Zola responded that he was by no means the first to set her there. He recalled Victor Hugo, with "Marion Delorme" and "La Esmeralda"; Dumas *fils*, with "La Dame aux Camelias"; Barriere and Thiboust with "Les Klés de Marbre," and Emile Augier with "Le Mariage d'Olympe." They and their imitators had lied, however; they had pictured harlots such as had never

existed since
the world was world, and his sin was that he
had done
his best to portray such a creature as she
really was.
"Besides," he added, "it seems to me
cowardice to shun
certain problems under the pretext that they
disturb one.
That is turning egotism and hypocrisy into a
system. Let
be, people say, let us cover up vice and
celebrate virtue

¹ "Journal des Goncourt," Vol. VI, p. 134.